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Legislature is in Session

Gearing up for the Activities

On February 1st, many community empowerment areas will be at the capitol in Des Moines to exhibit information about their local efforts in empowerment. We know that members of both the legislature and the legislative staff will be impressed with all the wonderful things being done to support the young children in Iowa. Thanks for making the effort.

If you want to stay up-to-speed on legislative issues, save on your favorites this website: www.legis.state.ia.us. This site includes: the text of bills and amendments, bill history, information about legislators, committee membership, calendar of events, and much more.

Also to keep in mind, a bill has to pass both chambers in identical form before it goes to the Governor. Not until the bill is signed by the Governor does it become law.

Triple Fun: Success Towards Achieving Results

Submitted by the Lakes Empowerment Area which consists of Clay, Dickinson, Osceola and O'Brien Counties.

Working with Parents as Teachers, Joy Smith and Dorothy Litts have had the opportunity to work with two sets of triplets.

We first met the S. family when Jacob was born in July 1999. The three boys were four years old, older than we had visited with before and we had not had the 3-5 training at this point. It was sometimes a challenge to have an activity all three boys would enjoy while Joy was visiting with Mom and Jacob. Usually two of the three would take part while one would want to do something else.

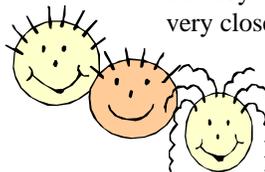
They did like to play board games and card games, and were always ready to talk. The boys also had plenty of toys, in fact three of everything! I sometimes took them to a nearby park to get out and exercise. We continued to visit until the boys began school in August 2000. It is fun to see them in their different classrooms and see the progress they are making. Mom is enjoying spending time with Jacob during the school day. Joy is continuing to make home visits with him.

The W. triplets began home visits in July 2000, age two. The two girls and one boy were quite shy at first, staying very close to Mom and being observers.

Now they look forward to our visits, looking out the window for our cars, and rushing to the door to see what activities we have.

They always want to investigate our bags to see what we have for them. They love to read and enjoy the books we leave each visit. They are comfortable taking part in the activities, and Mom really appreciates us coming to the home to help her teach and enrich these special children.

Thanks Dorothy C. Litts for submitting in this edition's Promising Practice.



Partnership for a Healthy Baby

Healthy Start of Visiting Nurse Services of Des Moines will be offering “Partnership for a Healthy Baby” ICN training sessions and curricula to Community Empowerment Areas in Northwest Iowa and the state funded HOPES-HFI sites.

The federal Healthy Start program approved the training plan as part of the grant awarded to Visiting Nurse Services of Des Moines. The standard curricula has been well received by participants in the Healthy Start program and has been demonstrated to achieve positive family outcomes.

Empowerment Areas that provide home visits for pregnant women and families with a new baby will benefit by receiving the “Partnering for a Healthy Baby” curricula and will learn about best practices through the training sessions. The Iowa Department of Public Health, Family Services Bureau, will be assisting to establish ICN sites for the training sessions.

Links to Empowerment web sites

State:

www.empowerment.state.ia.us

Woodbury:

www.siouxlandship.org

HAWC:

www.HAWC-Iowa.com

Polk:

www.humanservicesplanningaliance.org

[liance.org](http://www.humanservicesplanningaliance.org)

Buchanan Delaware Fayette:

www.bdfempowerment.org

Scott:

www.scottcountyempowerment.org/

Send us your web site address and we’ll include it in the next newsletter.

EMPOWERMENT TOOL

How The Open Records Law May Apply To Community Empowerment Areas

Community empowerment areas with concerns about the Open Records Law are encouraged to obtain legal advice within their communities. This could include legal representation from collaborative partners, the county attorney, city attorney, fiscal agents, or others. The following is intended for information purposes only.

All records of community empowerment area boards are subject to the Open Records Law. Iowa Code § 28.6(5) states in part as follows: “All meetings of a community empowerment area board or any committee or other body established by a community board at which public business is discussed or formal action taken shall comply with the requirements of chapter 21 [Open Meetings]. A community board shall maintain its records in accordance with chapter 22 [Open Records].”

What Is A Public Record?

- All records, documents, tape, or other information, stored or preserved in any medium, including computer records.
- Encompasses any comprehensible writing developed and/or maintained by a public body or official as a convenient, appropriate, or customary method by which the body or official discharges a public duty.
- Examples of public records
 - ① Agenda packages for governmental meetings
 - ② Grant applications
 - ③ RFPs, competitive bids, contracts
 - ④ Minutes of open session meetings
 - ⑤ Correspondence or e-mails involving the discharge of public duties
 - ⑥ Empowerment records maintained by the fiscal agent and/or the contracted entities

Public’s Right To Access

- The public has a right to examine and copy public records while the records are in the possession of the custodian – at any time during the customary office hours of the custodian.
- Examination and copying shall be done under the supervision of the lawful custodian – at the office if practicable.
- If copy equipment is available, a reasonable number of copies shall be provided at the office.

Charging For Public Records

- Fees for copying, supervision and retrieval of records may be charged in an amount not exceeding the cost of providing the services.
- Fee schedules adopted by a custodian must be uniformly applied to all requestors.

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Upcoming Events

Empowerment Board Meeting Schedule for 2001

United Way of Central Iowa,
Des Moines
April 6
July 13
October 1

Empowerment Advisory Council Meetings

Thursday, March 22, 2001
Thursday, June 21, 2001
Wednesday, September 19th, 2001

All meetings will be held in the West
Des Moines Resource Center in
West Des Moines

Early Childhood Care & Education Congress

February 27 and 28th, 2001
Holiday Inn Airport, Des Moines, IA

Pre-Congress Day on the Hill

February 26, 2001

Prevent Child Abuse Iowa Conference

"Safe from the Start: What Communities
Can Do to Prevent Child Abuse"

April 23-24, 2001
Holiday Inn, University Park

Quarterly Contact/Coordinator Meetings

Scheman Center, Ames

March 28, 8:30 – Noon
May 25, - 8:30 – Noon
July 25, -- 8:30 – Noon
September 24, 1:00 – 4:30

Progress Through Partnerships

Parent Educator Connection Conference XVII

February 11-13, 2001
Hotel Fort Des Moines

Every Child Reads Training

February 1, 6, 14, 20, 2001

Empowerment Indicators Data Project

The Information Technology
Department has finished the first set of
enhancements to the data website. The
data for the statewide indicators will be
available by clicking on a state map and
the data will be available by county or
by empowerment area.

The site can be accessed through
www.empowerment.state.ia.us under
the category Data and Indicators.

Empowerment Team's Activity Report

Site Visits/Technical Assistance/ Meetings with Empowerment Areas (December/January)

- Conference calls with all CEA's
regarding fiscal year 2000
annual reports
- Quarterly Empowerment
Contacts Meeting, December 14
- Tama County, assistance with
TA application, January 16
- Hardin County Empowerment
Board retreat, January 17
- Lee Van Buren Early Childhood
Seminar, January 20

Outreach/Linkages (December/January)

- Decat Coordinators Meeting,
December 5
- Early Childhood Care &
Education Congress Planning
Meeting, December 5 and
January 26
- Children's Mental Health
Meeting, December 13-14
- Department of Education Early
Childhood Team, December 19
and January 16
- Fatherhood Directors and
interagency workgroup meetings,
December 28
- Boost 4 Kids Conference Call,
January 5, 2001
- Meeting with Julie Ingersoll,
DHS, January 11
- Child Care Advisory Council,
January 11
- Child Development Coordinating
Council, January 17
- Youth Development
Collaboration meeting, January
18
- FaDDS Council, January 18
- Meeting with CCR&R Lead
Agency Directors, January 29
- Youth Development State
Agency Workgroup, January 29
- Healthy Communities
Conference, January 30





Meet the State Empowerment Team!

From the top left to right: Bill Brand, Dept. of Human Rights; Harold Coleman, Dept. of Human Services; Kris Bell, Dept. of Management; Dee Gethmann, Dept. of Education; Jo Hinrichs, Dept. of Public Health; and Shanell Wagler, Dept. of Management.

Our newest member, Jeff Anderson. Jeff joined us on January 5, 2001 from the Department of Human Services.



Office support staff person, Marcia Murrow from the Department of Management.



We all look forward to working with you to continue the efforts brought forth for Community Empowerment.

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Reasonable Time To Comply

- Public records should generally be provided upon demand.
- Requests for large numbers of records should be accommodated as rapidly as circumstances permit.
- Public bodies may reasonably delay access for the purpose of determining whether a record is confidential – up to 20 calendar days, but ordinarily not more than 10 business days.

Confidential Records

- Section 22.7 lists 39 categories of public records which shall be confidential unless subject to administrative, criminal or civil subpoena, or ordered by:
 - ① a court,
 - ② the lawful custodian, or
 - ③ another person duly authorized to release such information.

Use Common Sense

- Chapter 22 does not require a government body to honor phone, fax, or e-mail requests for public records.
- Most public servants do honor such requests for the mutual convenience of everyone.
- Creating accessible public records through a website or other innovative means is sound public policy.

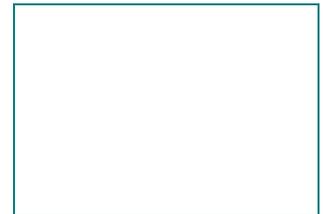
Three Golden Rules

- The reason the requestor wants the record is irrelevant – so don't ask!
- Public records cannot be withheld without cited legal authority.
- There is always time to ask for legal advice if you do not know if a record should or can be provided – do not unnecessarily delay when the answer is obvious, but do not be pressured to decide "on the spot" if you are legitimately unsure.

Suggestions (Not Requirements) To Facilitate Open Records

- Empowerment boards should specifically designate for the record (in by-laws or minutes) where the physical possession of records will be kept.
- Empowerment boards should establish policies and procedures for supervision of public examination and copying of public records. Such policies and procedures should be considered in consultation with the fiscal agent in/or other contracted entities. Such policies and procedures should include – place where examination and copying may take place; provision of reasonable number of copies; and fees (if not free, as determined by the local board) for copying service not to exceed the cost of providing the service.

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